Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BEIRUT 08947 211337Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00
CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05
PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 OMB-01 SY-05 OC-06 CCO-00
TRSE-00 OPR-02 SCS-03 SCA-01 IO-13 SSM-03 /084 W
---------- 080161 /44
O R 211133Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2574
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 8947

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, SOPN, PINT, LE, SY
SUBJECT: OCCUPATION OF BEIRUT PRESS OFFICES BY SYRIAN TROOPS

REF: BEIRUT 8932

1. US JOURNALISTS. WHEN AMERICAN PRESS CORPS PROCEEDED FROM COMMODORE HOTEL TO AN NAHAR BUILDING EARLY DEC 20, NO RPT NO CONFRONTATION ENSUED. UPI JOURNALISTS DOYLE MCMANUS AND DAVID PIERCE AND NEWSWEEK REPORTER TONY CLIFTON WERE QUICKLY ALLOWED TO ENTER THEIR OFFICES IN AN NAHAR BUILDING, AFTER EXPLAINING WHO THEY WERE TO SYRIAN PARATROOP LIEUTENANT IN CHARGE ON THE GROUNDS. BOTH NEWSWEEK AND UPI MADE FULL USE OF THEIR OFFICES THROUGHOUT DEC 20, INCLUDING TELEPHONES. (THEY HAD NO ELECTRICITY, BUT THIS TOO WAS RESTORED EARLY DEC 20.) L'ORIENT LE JOUR STAFF WAS ALSO ALLOWED TO ENTER BUILDING AND WORK, ALTHOUGH L'ORIENT, WHICH
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BEIRUT 08947 211337Z

USES SAMME PRESSES AS AN NAHAR, HAS NOT APPEARED AND PROBABLY WILL NOT UNTIL USE OF AN NAHAR PRESSES CAN BE NEGOTIATED. SYRIAN FORCES ON THE GROUND WOULD NOT RPT NOT PERMIT TELE-VISION AND OTHER CAMERAS TO BE BROUGHT CLOSER THAN SOME 100 YARDS FROM BUILDING. CLEARLY, EXCLUSION OF US JOURNALISTS FROM THEIR OFFICES WAS SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY WERE LOCATED IN

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006

AN NAHAR BUILDING. MCMANUS TELLS US THAT OCCUPYING SYRIAN FORCE WAS AT OUTSET NOT EVEN AWARE THAT L'ORIENT OCCUPIED SAME BUILDING.

2. WHO IS BEHIND OPERATION? BOTH UPI AND NEWSWEEK CORRESPONDENTS TELL US THEY ATTEMPTED ALL DAY DEC 20, WITHOUT SUCCESS, TO ESTABLISH EXACTLY WHO "GAVE THE ORDER" TO OCCUPY AN NAHAR BUILDING. PRESIDENT SARKIS AND HIS STAFF ARE UNREACHABLE; ASF LEBANESE LIAISON STAFF CHIEF COL AL-HAJJ IS NOT RETURNING CALLS. SYRIAN OFFICER ON THE GROUNDS IS TTELLING PRESS THAT HIS ORRDERS COME FROM HIS SYRIAN ARMY SUPERIOR AND ULTIMATELY FROM STAFF OF COL AL-HAJJ. HE TOLD MCMANUS THAT OCCUPATION WAS "TO PROTECT THE NEWSPAPERS."

3. MEDIATION INITIATIVES. UNRELATED TO PREVIOUSLY REPORTED INITIATIVE UNDERTAKEN BY AN NAHAR EDITOR MICHEL ABU JAWDE TO ESTABLISH A "SUPERIOR PRESS COUNCIL" (REFTEL), BEIRUT PRESS SYNDICATE MET DEC 20 AND APPARENTLY DECIDED TO PROPOSE YET ANOTHER SELF-CENSORSHIP SYSTEM TO PRESIDENT SARKIS.

4. REOPENING AN NAHAR? WE WERE TOLD EARLY DEC 21 BY AMERICAN REPORTERS WHO ARE IN TOUCH WITH AN NAHAR STAFF THAT CURRENT PREVALENT EXPECTATION IS THAT AN NAHAR WILL REMAIN CLOSED FOR SEVERAL WEEKS.

5. BY EXTRAORDINARY COINCIDENCE, FIRST ISSUE OF NEW FRENCH LANGUAGE BEIRUT DAILY NEWSPAPER, "LE LIBERAL," APPEARED ALSO ON DEC 20. LE LIBERAL HAS ITS OFFICES IN EAST BEIRUT HEADQUARTERS OF CAMILLE CHAMON'S NATIONAL LIBERAL PARTY--WHICH REQUIRES NO FURTHER COMMENT. ON THE CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BEIRUT 08947 211337Z

LIGHTER SIDE, RESTAURANT IN AN NAHAR BUILDING, HWICH HAS BEEN CLOSED FOR MONTHS DUE TO WAR AAND FINALLY REOPENED DEC 18, IS NOW AGAIN CLOSED, THIS TIME FOR LACK OF CUSTOMERS.
HOUGHTON

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MILITARY OCCUPATION, NEWSPAPERS, CLOSING OF OFFICES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 21 DEC 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CunninFX
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976BEIRUT08947
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760468-0299
From: BEIRUT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761222/aaaaasot.tel
Line Count: 101
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 BEIRUT 8932
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CunninFX
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <10 JUN 2004 by greeneet>; APPROVED <04 OCT 2004 by CunninFX>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: OCCUPATION OF BEIRUT PRESS OFFICES BY SYRIAN TROOPS
TAGS: PFOR, SOPN, PINT, LE, SY
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006